

## APPENDIX I:

THE LISTING OF CLAIMS:

1. (previously presented) A process for preparing methyl formate by reacting excess methanol with carbon monoxide under superatmospheric pressure and at elevated temperature in the presence of alkali metal methoxide or alkaline earth metal methoxide as catalyst in a pressure-rated reactor, separating the methyl formate formed from the reaction product and recirculating the liquid phase which is essentially free of methyl formate to the reactor, with part of the liquid phase to be recirculated being discharged and fresh catalyst solution being fed in, wherein

the reaction is carried out in a cascade comprising at least two reactor elements

at from 80 to 120°C,

under a carbon monoxide pressure of from 90 to 180 bar,

in the presence of from 0.05 to 0.5% by weight, based on the weight of the liquid feed, of an alkali metal alkoxide or alkaline earth metal alkoxide,

the molar ratio of carbon monoxide to methanol is set from 3:1 to 0.5:1, whereby at least that amount of methanol required to keep both the catalyst used and its degradation products virtually completely dissolved under the reaction conditions in the reactor and in the fresh reaction product remains unreacted,

the total output from the reactor is passed to a distilling apparatus in which essentially the methyl formate is stripped from the reaction mixture,

a part TR of from 80 to 20% of the remaining liquid phase is recirculated to the reactor and a part TA is discharged,

and residual catalyst and catalyst degradation products are removed solids-free from the discharged part in a desalting apparatus and the remaining methanol is returned directly or indirectly to the reactor.
2. (original) A process as claimed in claim 1 carried out using from 2 to 5 reactor elements.
3. (previously presented) A process as claimed in claim 1, wherein steam and/or hot water and, if desired, additional heat are fed to the discharged part TA of the liquid phase remaining after separating

off the methyl formate, consisting essentially of methanol containing catalyst and catalyst degradation products, in the desalting apparatus in such amounts that the methanol is essentially completely vaporized and an aqueous solution of the catalyst degradation products is obtained.

4. (previously presented) A process as claimed in claim 1, wherein the desalting apparatus is operated as an integrated heat system with the distillation apparatus and the methanol vapor leaving the top of the desalting apparatus is fed to the distillation apparatus.
5. (canceled)
6. (canceled)
7. (canceled)
8. (canceled)
9. (canceled)